

Feds issue dire air bag warning

Recall fix is 'essential to personal safety'

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USA TODAY

Rising concern prompted federal auto safety regulators to boost dramatically, to at least 7.78 million, the U.S. vehicles previously recalled for faulty Takata air bags that they say pose a dire threat to front passengers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in very strong language for the agency, told owners "with urgency" to get the cars from 10 makers fixed at

once as a matter "essential to personal safety."

Only a handful of additional vehicles were added to existing Takata air bag recall this week, but Toyota and General Motors are taking the added step of sending overnight letters to owners of some cars warning them not to have front-seat passengers until the repair is made.

The new and dire warnings, along with the underlying recalls dating to 2008, apply mainly to older vehicles sold or ever registered in areas with particularly high humidity, such as Southern Florida and Puerto Rico.

However, Consumers Union, the advocacy affiliate of *Consumer*

Reports, said Wednesday afternoon that it believes "the dangers could be far broader," than just humid locations. And it said its data show 100 injuries from the faulty bags.

Two deaths, reported years ago by Honda, have been linked to the issue.

When the faulty bags inflate, they can tear loose from their brackets, blowing pieces of their housings at occupants. The propellant in the defective bags was improperly handled during manufacture, and the danger is amplified by humidity.

NHTSA said it has an ongoing

Takata recall Q&A, 5B

How to tell if your car is affected, what to do next, and more

investigation into the bags. Federal prosecutors also have opened an inquiry into Takata's actions, according to a report on Wednesday by *The Wall Street Journal*, citing "people familiar with the matter." USA TODAY could not independently confirm that.

Owners have been lax about the repairs. GM, for example, says that only about 10% of affected vehicles have been brought in.

Takata supplies bags to multiple makers, and the defect has triggered recalls of some 16 million vehicles globally.

POTENTIALLY AFFECTED VEHICLES

Here's the latest tally from NHTSA, as of Wednesday morning:

BMW

627,615 potentially affected vehicles
2000-05 3 Series sedan
2000-06 3 Series coupe
2000-05 3 Series sports wagon
2000-06 3 Series convertible
2001-06 M3 coupe
2001-06 M3 convertible

CHRYSLER

371,309 potentially affected vehicles
2003-08 Dodge Ram 1500
2005-08 Dodge Ram 2500
2006-08 Dodge Ram 3500
2006-08 Dodge Ram 4500
2008 Dodge Ram 5500
2005-08 Dodge Durango

2005-08 Dodge Dakota
2005-08 Chrysler 300
2007-08 Chrysler Aspen

FORD

58,669 potentially affected vehicles
2004 Ranger
2005-06 GT
2005-07 Mustang

GENERAL MOTORS

Undetermined number of potentially affected vehicles
2003-05 Pontiac Vibe
2005 Saab 9-2X

HONDA

5,051,364 potentially affected vehicles
2001-07 Honda Accord
2001-05 Honda Civic
2002-06 Honda CR-V
2003-11 Honda Element

2002-04 Honda Odyssey
2003-07 Honda Pilot
2006 Honda Ridgeline
2003-06 Acura MDX
2002-03 Acura TL/CL
2005 Acura RL

MAZDA

64,872 potentially affected vehicles
2003-07 Mazda6
2006-07 Mazdaspeed6
2004-08 Mazda RX-8
2004-05 MPV
2004 B-Series Truck

MINI

11,985 potentially affected vehicles
2004-05 Lancer
2006-07 Raider

NISSAN

694,626 potentially affected vehicles
2001-03 Nissan Maxima

2001-04 Nissan Pathfinder
2002-04 Nissan Sentra
2001-04 Infiniti I30/I35
2002-03 Infiniti QX4
2003-05 Infiniti FX35/FX45

SUBARU

17,516 potentially affected vehicles
2003-05 Baja
2003-05 Legacy
2003-05 Outback
2003-05 Baja
2004-05 Impreza

TOYOTA

877,000 potentially affected vehicles
2002-05 Lexus SC
2002-05 Toyota Corolla
2003-05 Toyota Corolla Matrix
2002-05 Toyota Sequoia
2003-05 Toyota Tundra

SOURCE: NHTSA